

# City of New Haven

Toni N. Harp – Mayor



## *Testimony Regarding*

### **SB 301 AN ACT CONCERNING SUSPENSION OF ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR PERMITS BY MUNICIPAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS**

March 6, 2014

Senator Doyle, Rep. Baram, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of SB 301, An Act Concerning Suspension of Alcoholic Liquor Permits by Municipal Law Enforcement Officials. New Haven has long been struggling with how to best deal with the problem bars, where issues have existed ranging from persistent drug dealing, to violence, to even homicide. Police departments around the State have spent considerable resources investigating activity at some of these establishments, yet current liquor permit regulations and processes make addressing these concerns difficult. We welcome the additional powers outlined in this bill as yet another way to promote public safety in our communities.

Current liquor statutes give the Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection the ability to "in its discretion, suspend, revoke or refuse to grant or renew a permit for the sale of alcoholic liquor if it has reasonable cause to believe:...(4) that the place has been conducted as a lewd or disorderly establishment." The proposed bill would give the same authority to a local chief law enforcement officer establishing that he "may, in such chief law enforcement officer's discretion, suspend such permit if such chief law enforcement officer has reasonable cause to believe that the permit premises has been conducted as a disorderly establishment, as evidenced by not less than three documented incidents that have occurred on or adjacent to the permit premises."

In New Haven alone, there are establishments where the use of these additional powers may make it safer, perhaps even save lives. For example, over the course of a year and a half, a single establishment was the location of a fatal shooting this past October as well as:

1. A shooting that occurred on June 9, 2013.
2. A threatened shooting that occurred on January 6, 2013, well after legal drinking hours.
3. A threatened shooting that occurred on March 24, 2012 where a patron was arrested for, among other things, criminal possession of weapon.
4. Another threatened shooting that occurred on May 20, 2012 where a patron was arrested for, among other things, criminal possession of weapon by a convicted felon

Since municipal police departments must respond to and investigate public safety problems at these establishments -- and, therefore, have the most knowledge of activities occurring at such establishments -- it only makes sense to give them sufficient power to ensure public safety in their communities. While we have been working collaboratively with the State's Department of Consumer Protection Department generally and the Liquor Control Division specifically in their review of these establishments, this bill would allow police departments to provide further assistance and help address threats to public safety more directly.

Thank you for your consideration of this very valuable legislation.